

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Career Boards in the Department of State.

SOURCE: Mr. Fred Darnell, Chief, Performance Evaluation Branch,
Personnel Office, Department of State; interviews by
[redacted]

STATINTL

1. The Board of the Foreign Service:

a. Organizational Location: The organization chart shows that the Board reports directly to the Secretary of State. Actually, as the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration is chairman of the Board, reports are made to the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration and by him, to the Secretary of State.

b. Duties: This is a policy board, making recommendations concerning functions, policies and procedures governing the selection, assignment, rating and promotion of Foreign Service Officers and the administration and personnel management of the Service.

c. Composition: As prescribed by the Foreign Service Act of 1946, the Board is composed of the Assistant Secretary of State in charge of the administration of the Department, as chairman (now the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Administration), two other Assistant Secretaries selected by the Secretary; the Director General; and one representative each, occupying positions with comparable responsibilities, from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce and Labor, designated by the heads of those departments.

d. Personnel Files Maintained: None.

2. The Board of Examiners of the Foreign Service:

a. Organizational Location: The chairman of the Board has always been the Director General of the Foreign Service and reports were made through him (he reports to the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration). Organizationally, however, the Board is located in the Office of Personnel and formal command channels should therefore be through the Director of Personnel. In 1954 the then Under Secretary for Administration designated the command channel as through the Director of Personnel to the Comptroller to the (now) Deputy Under Secretary for Administration.

The working group in the Board is the Secretariat, under an Executive Director. The Secretariat is in the Examining Branch, Employment Division, Office of Personnel.

b. Duties: Under the general supervision of the Board of the Foreign Service and in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary, the Board provides for and supervises the conduct of such examinations as may be given to candidates for appointment as members of the Foreign Service and provides for necessary procedures to determine the loyalty of such persons to the United States and their attachment to the principles of the Constitution.

c. Composition: The Foreign Service Act of 1946 authorizes the Secretary of State to determine the membership providing that not more than half shall be Foreign Service Officers. The Secretary has prescribed the following membership: the Director General of the Foreign Service as Chairman, ex officio; the Chief, Employment Division, Office of Personnel, ex officio; one representative, each, from the Departments of Labor and Commerce and the Civil Service Commission; and three others from the Department of State (formerly, two Foreign Service Officers and one departmental officer; since the "Wriston integration," all three are Foreign Service Officers).

d. Personnel Files Maintained: Pre-employment records are maintained. When an applicant is employed, these records are sent to the Office of Personnel and are placed in his personnel folder.

3. The Foreign Service Institute:

a. Organizational Location: The Institute is under the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration.

b. Duties: As prescribed by the Foreign Service Act of 1946, the Institute shall plan for and furnish training and instruction to the officers and employees of the Foreign Service and of the State Department, and to other officers and employees of the Government "for whom training and instruction in the field of foreign relations is necessary." The Institute may set up its own programs and may make grants to cooperating nonprofit institutions. The Institute may also detail officers and employees of the Service "for special instruction or training at or with public or private nonprofit institutions, trade, labor, agricultural, or scientific associations, or commercial firms."

c. Composition: The Secretary of State appoints the head of the Institute, known as its Director. The Secretary also makes appointments and details to the faculty and staff of the Institute.

d. Personnel Files Maintained: The Institute maintains training and administrative records on those employees being trained. When a State Department Employee's training is completed, an Institute report is placed in his personnel file. This may be a memorandum, letter, Institute evaluation form or the regular efficiency report of the Department. It is planned to replace these with a standard form.

4. The Foreign Service Officer Selection Boards:

a. Organizational Location: The Foreign Service Act of 1946 authorizes the Secretary of State to establish selection boards to evaluate the performance of Foreign Service officers. The boards establish their own internal organization, are served by the staff of the Performance Evaluation Branch, Office of Personnel and present their conclusions and recommendations in writing to the Director of Personnel. New boards are selected each year.

b. Duties: Each board is given a precept, prepared by the Performance Evaluation Branch, Office of Personnel outlining its duties, responsibilities, the procedures to be followed and the major factors to be considered in evaluating the officers.

A board is established for each class of officers. By examining in detail the records in each officer's personnel file, each board rates all officers in the class and creates a list for promotion purposes ranking the officers from highest to lowest. The board establishes a line on the list, recommending promotion for all those officers whose names appear above it. It also prepares lists of those officers whose performance is considered (1) marginal, (2) submarginal, and (3) unsatisfactory. The facts on which the decisions are based are also given.

c. Composition: Each board consists of four selected officers from the next higher class and no officer can serve on a board for two consecutive years. Observers are also selected; one each from the Departments of Commerce and Labor. They have access to the records and participate in the discussions but do not vote. Public voting members are also included; last year there were six. These members are not required by law and there is some internal opposition to their continuance.

d. Personnel Files Maintained: None. The boards have full access to the official personnel performance folders. They may request the Chief, Performance Evaluation Branch, Office of Personnel to obtain additional information when it is needed. Security and medical folders are not available to the boards; a representative of either office will appear, upon request, before a board to present oral information considered necessary to the evaluation of an officer.

In general, the boards are not aware of security investigations pending or in process which concern officers being rated. The Director of Security notifies the Director of Personnel of those officers who should not be promoted. Their names are then removed from the list of those to be promoted. If the Director of Security later removes his objections to an officer recommended for promotion, that officer's name may be sent forward, separately, with a recommendation for promotion. (Foreign Service Officer promotions are made by the President.)

The personnel file contains only a slip from the Medical Office indicating whether an officer is classed as cleared, limited (which may be specified or may require inquiry of the Medical Office) or restricted to duty in the United States. Representatives of the Medical Office will answer questions concerning the physical and mental fitness of an officer but will not identify a disease from which he may be suffering.

5. The Staff Corps Review Panels:

These panels are selected and serve in the same manner as the FSO Selection Boards, rating the members of the staff corps and recommending those considered eligible for promotion and those whose performance is considered marginal, submarginal or unsatisfactory. The panels do not include observers nor public members.